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# ANNUAL REPORT

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WEDNESFIELD

Urban Sanitary Authority

BY

ARTHUR HANDS

L.R.C.P.L., M.R.C.S. Eng., M.O.H.,

FOR THE YEAR 1893

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WOLVERHAMPTON

CULLWICK BROTHERS PRINTERS MARKET STREET



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# Medical Officer's Annual Report,

FEBRUARY 26th, 1894.

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MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present to you the usual Annual Report for the twelve months ended December 31st, 1893.

At Midsummer the estimated population was 4,970, living in 1,005 houses. One hundred and eleven children have been born—52 boys and 59 girls—and 55 persons have died during the year. The birth-rate is 22·5 and death-rate 13·2 per thousand of the population. The deaths include 5 from Measles; 6 from Diarrhœa; 3 from Phthisis; 1 from Pyæmia; 10 from Bronchial Affections, and 30 from all other diseases.

The mortality was especially high in January and December, no less than 25 of the total number of deaths having occurred during these two months, and leaving the remaining 30 to be distributed over the other ten months. Thirteen of the deaths took place at New Invention, 9 at Wood End, 3 at the Scotlands, 6 at March End, and 24 in Wednesfield proper. It will be seen, therefore, that the former place is the least sanitary, and has been mentioned as such in many former reports to the Board, and that the Scotlands is the most healthy portion of the district; the death rate there being only 8·9 per thousand, while at New Invention it reaches 23·3.

Eleven children died from Zymotic disease, giving a rate of 2·2 per thousand, and being about the average for the past ten years.

It will be seen from the accompanying Table A, that 3 cases of Phthisis have terminated fatally during the year, and, unfortunately, this cause of so many deaths in Wednesfield is very seldom if ever absent from the yearly return I make to the Board; and it is a remarkable thing that at least two out of every three cases occur either in North Street or New Street, this year all of them existed in the latter street.

As we know this disease favors damp and clayey soils, and taking into consideration the very wet and muddy state of North Street, which renders it almost impassable during the winter months, I would recommend the Board to take steps to have the matter attended to by having the street properly curbed and channelled.

Influenza has prevailed in a milder state than it did in 1892 during the year, but no death is attributable to this disease alone, although there is little doubt that it has indirectly, though materially, influenced the death-rate, as almost a fifth of the entire number of deaths is due to Pulmonary Affections, and which are known to be often induced by this complaint. Speaking generally, the past season has not favored in an exceptional degree the mortality from diseases of the respiratory organs.

Happily there has been no Small Pox in our district, although there is a case just over the borders which might possibly spread to us. I may say with regard to the Vaccination performed in the locality, there can be, I think, no question that there has been a distinct deterioration during recent years; and I am convinced that numbers of young children are very inadequately protected from Small Pox by this most beneficent operation.

This is much to be deplored, because the people are surely preparing the way for a recurrence of an epidemic of this loathsome complaint, possibly at no distant date.

Measles were epidemic in the district, and many cases occurred in the first quarter of the year, and five children died, either from the original affection or its complications.



One case of Chicken Pox, 2 of Enteric Fever, and 12 of Scarlartina were brought to my notice during the year.

Eight cases of the latter disease occurred at the Cottage Homes, part of which were treated at the Borough Infectious Hospital and part were isolated at the Homes, no death having taken place among them.

Two other cases were found to be existing at a milkseller's in the Graiseley Lane; they were not of a severe type, however. I visited the house and gave the necessary instructions for isolation and disinfection, with the additional precaution that no milk should be brought into the house preparatory to the sale of it, and no other cases occurred in the locality until the present month as far as I am aware. These I have mentioned further on.

I would again urge the Board to adopt the Notification Act, as I am sure it would be beneficial, and would not be nearly as expensive as may be thought; on the average it would not cost more than £5 per annum, and taking 1893 as an example, it would be much less than this amount if the notification of Measles was excluded. The number of districts which have not adopted it are gradually diminishing, and I would not like, nor would you, gentlemen, like Wednesfield to be the *last* of the number.

I will only just mention again the necessity for a small Isolation Hospital, as I have brought the matter forward so often and so regularly in my Annual Reports that I may have wearied you with iteration and reiteration; but I do wish sincerely you would do something in the matter, for it is of very great importance.

I may say there are two rather bad cases of Scarlartina existing in New Street at the present time, which most likely will spread the disease, and which isolation in a properly appointed place would almost certainly at once check, and perhaps be the means of saving human lives, or at any rate would obviate much sickness and suffering.

Owing to the exceptionally hot weather this summer, there was great scarcity of water in parts of the district, especially at the Scotlands, where drinking water had to be carried long distances for use, some of the wells having dried partially up.

I made a special report to the Board at the time, and mentioned I had examined five or six samples of well-water, and found them in every case more or less polluted with sewage or other matter; in one case most dangerously so, and I recommend the mains of the Waterworks Co. should be extended thither from the Cottage Homes, which already have such a supply, but the Board was unable to see its way clear to adopt this very necessary measure. I think I shall not err in saying most if not all of the shallow wells in Wednesfield are more or less contaminated with extraneous matter, and it is a subject I submit the Board would do well to seriously consider, as the supply of pure water to the people is one of the very first duties of a Sanitary Authority.

The Central Authorities appear to be carrying out the clauses of the Rivers Pollution Act with increasing stringency, so that in the near future the Board will probably have to contemplate a more comprehensive system of sewage disposal than they have at present; but such a serious undertaking will require much consideration, and I would advise the Board to have the district thoroughly inspected by a good Engineer before taking steps in the matter.

There can be no doubt I think of the immense benefit to the health of the people that so desirable a consummation would confer.

I am, Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

ARTHUR HANDS.



